BATMAN
LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT

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THE PRIMAL RIDDLE
Part Two of Three

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ENGLEHART • ABELL • GERACI

PRIMAL RIDDLE

Chapter Two: Perhaps the Only Riddle That We Shrink From Giving Up!

--AND THE CHILD HUNG FROM THE FLAGPOLE DESPITE WHAT DOCTORS LATER DETERMINED TO BE A SEPARATED SHOULDER--

OUCH!

YOU SAID IT, KATEY. WITNESSES CALLED IT AT LEAST TEN MINUTES BEFORE RED INFANTE OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT GOT HIM DOWN. LITTLE TOMMY SAID AFTERWARD, HE HELD ON BECAUSE THE BATMAN WOULD HAVE.

THAT'S SO SWEET!

I'M GOING TO HIT THE CLUBS, EDDIE. I KNOW YOU'VE GOT WORK TO DO...

Mmm? OH--SURE, CHÈRÉE.

SOMETHING ON YOUR MONKEY MIND?

JUST...A RIDDLE.

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Jnx_Scanz_HaCsA !!!

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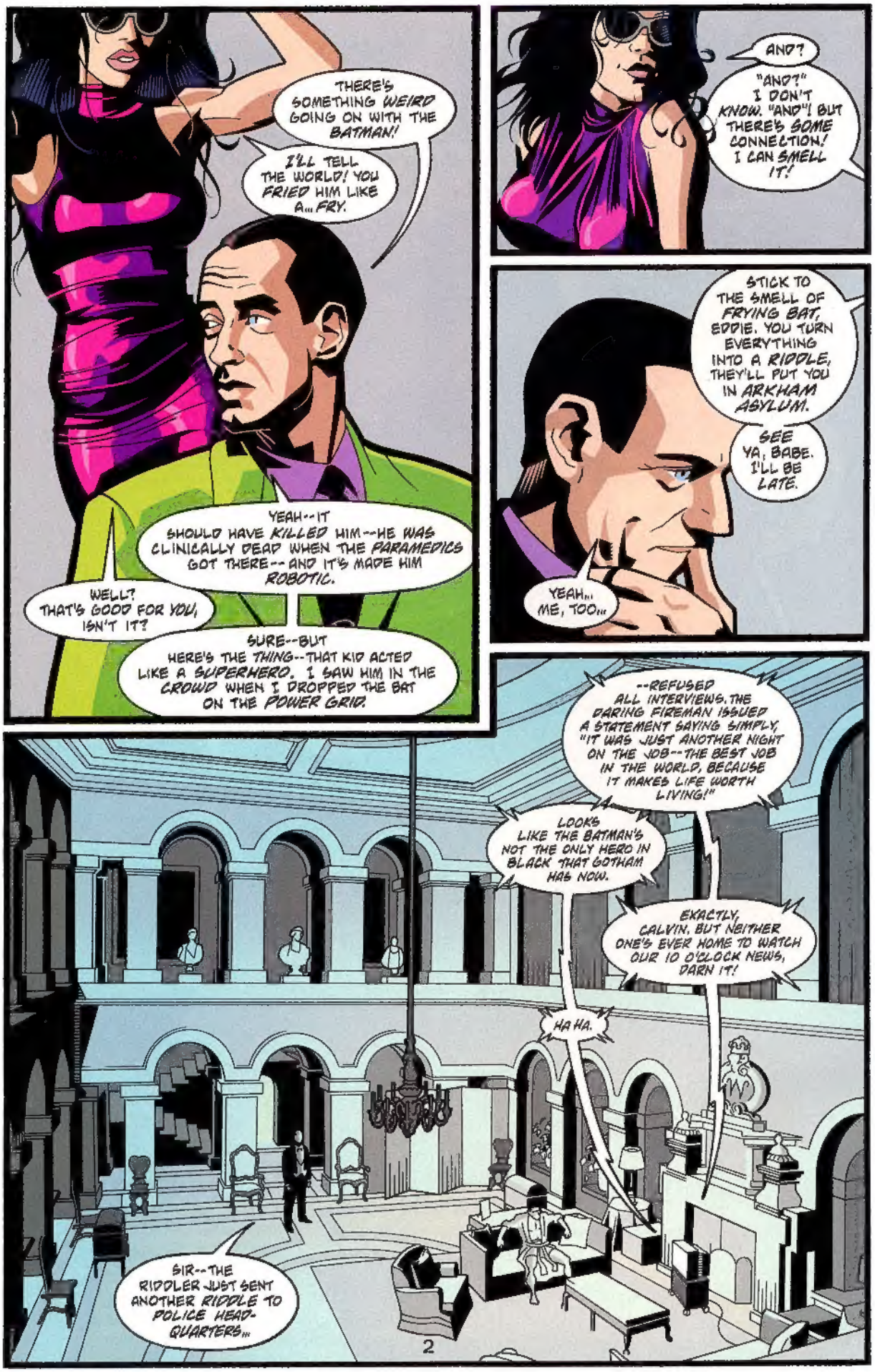

THERE'S SOMETHING WEIRD GOING ON WITH THE BATMAN!
I'LL TELL THE WORLD! YOU FRIED HIM LIKE A... FRY.
YEAH--IT SHOULD HAVE KILLED HIM--HE WAS CLINICALLY DEAD WHEN THE PARAMEDICS GOT THERE--AND IT'S MADE HIM ROBOTIC.
WELL? THAT'S GOOD FOR YOU, ISN'T IT?
SURE--BUT HERE'S THE THING--THAT KID ACTED LIKE A SUPERHERO. I SAW HIM IN THE CROWD WHEN I DROPPED THE BAT ON THE POWER GRID.
AND?
"AND?" I DON'T KNOW. "AND"! BUT THERE'S SOME CONNECTION! I CAN SMELL IT!
STICK TO THE SMELL OF FRYING BAT, EDDIE. YOU TURN EVERYTHING INTO A RIDDLE, THEY'LL PUT YOU IN ARKHAM ASYLUM.
SEE YA, BABE. I'LL BE LATE.
YEAH... ME, TOO...
--REFUSED ALL INTERVIEWS. THE DARING FIREMAN ISSUED A STATEMENT SAYING SIMPLY, "IT WAS JUST ANOTHER NIGHT ON THE JOB--THE BEST JOB IN THE WORLD, BECAUSE IT MAKES LIFE WORTH LIVING!"
LOOKS LIKE THE BATMAN'S NOT THE ONLY HERO IN BLACK THAT GOTHAM HAS NOW.
EXACTLY, CALVIN, BUT NEITHER ONE'S EVER HOME TO WATCH OUR 10 O'CLOCK NEWS, DARN IT!
HA HA.
SIR--THE RIDDLER JUST SENT ANOTHER RIDDLE TO POLICE HEAD-QUARTERS...

PLEASE GOD, LET THIS ONE STIMULATE HIM--
--BRING HIM BACK TO NORMAL.
I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM LIKE THIS.
"WHAT HAS A TONGUE BUT NO MOUTH, LEGS BUT NO ARMS, AND A BREAST BUT NO BACK-BONE?"

DON'T KNOW.
NOT LOGICAL.

IT'S A MEAT MARKET--A DELI OR A GROCERY. WE DON'T KNOW WHICH ONE, BUT THAT'S WHAT IT IS.
MASTER BRUCE, YOU REALLY MUST SEE A SPECIALIST ABOUT YOUR CONDITION. PERHAPS A PSYCHIATRIST. IT'S BEYOND MY KEN.

THANK YOU, ALFRED. GOOD MAN. GOOD FRIEND.
I KNOW SOMETHING IS WRONG. BUT BATMAN NEEDED NOW--RIDDLER.

SOMEONE ELSE CAN DEAL WITH HIM!
NO. MY JOB. I SWORE.
YOU NEED HELP, SIR.
LATER.

ELEVEN P.M., IN THE *FAR NORTHERN REACHES* OF GOTHAM CITY--

BATMAN! THANK GOD YOU'RE HERE!

YOU CALLED.

IT'S *JUST NUTS!* THE RIDDLER'S BEEN KIDNAPPING *RICH* PEOPLE, BUT NOW HE'S TAKEN A MRS.. *YARASLAVA YETRZMSKY,* WHO RUNS THIS *MOM-AND-POP* STORE!

NOT LOGICAL.

YOU CAN SAY *THAT* AGAIN!

I'LL PUT OUT AN *APB,* BUT I DON'T MIND ADMITTING, WE COUNT ON *YOU* AGAINST WACKOS LIKE THE *RIDDLER.*

WHAT DO YOU THINK'S GOIN' *ON* HERE?

DON'T KNOW.

BUT--

HEY, *SARGE!* LOOK WHO *WE* GOT!

LISTEN TO HER *STORY!*

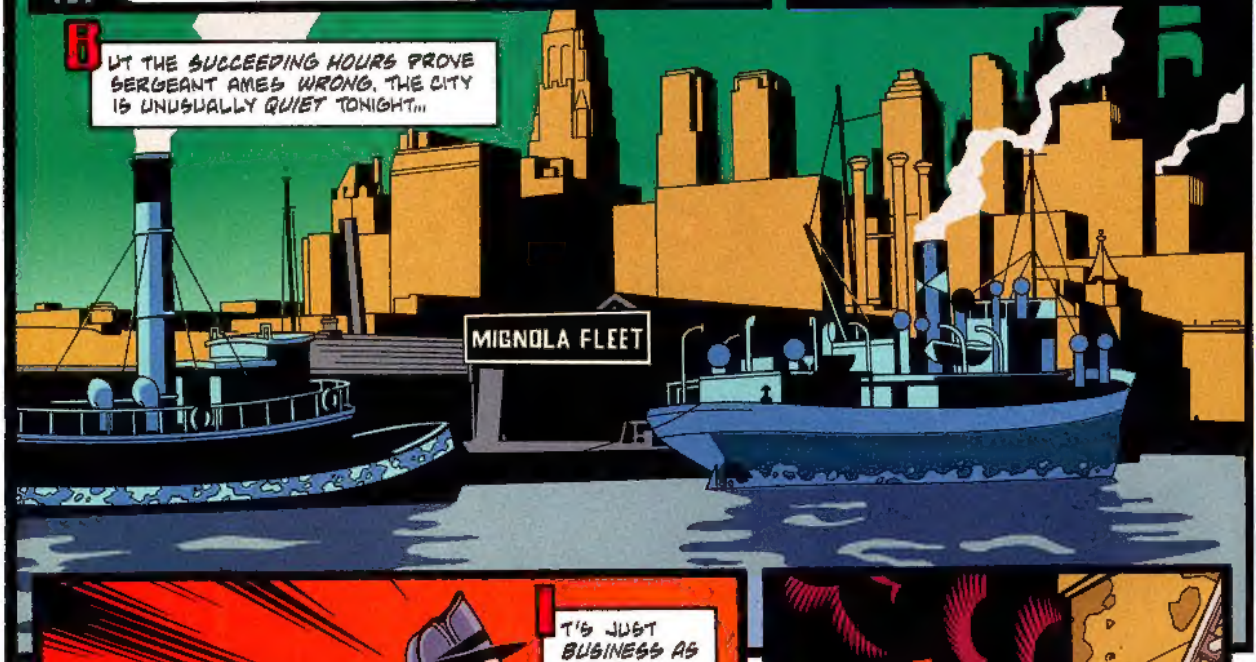
THAT *RIDDLER* FELLA, HE CAME INTO MY STORE AND ASKED ME WHY A *DOCTOR* KEEPS HIS *BANDAGES* IN THE *FREEZER,* AND I SAID I DIDN'T *KNOW,* SO HE WENT "*WANNKH!*" YOU KNOW LIKE A BUZZER ON A *TV SHOW,* AND THEN HE SAID THE ANSWER WAS, "BECAUSE HE WAS SAVING THEM FOR *COLD CUTS,*" AND SINCE I GOT IT *WRONG,* I HAD TO GO *WITH* HIM.

HE TREATED ME SO *NICE,* AND THEN HE LET ME *GO,* AFTER JUST *HALF AN HOUR.*

HE SAID HE HAD TO GET BACK TO WORKING ON A *RIDDLE.*

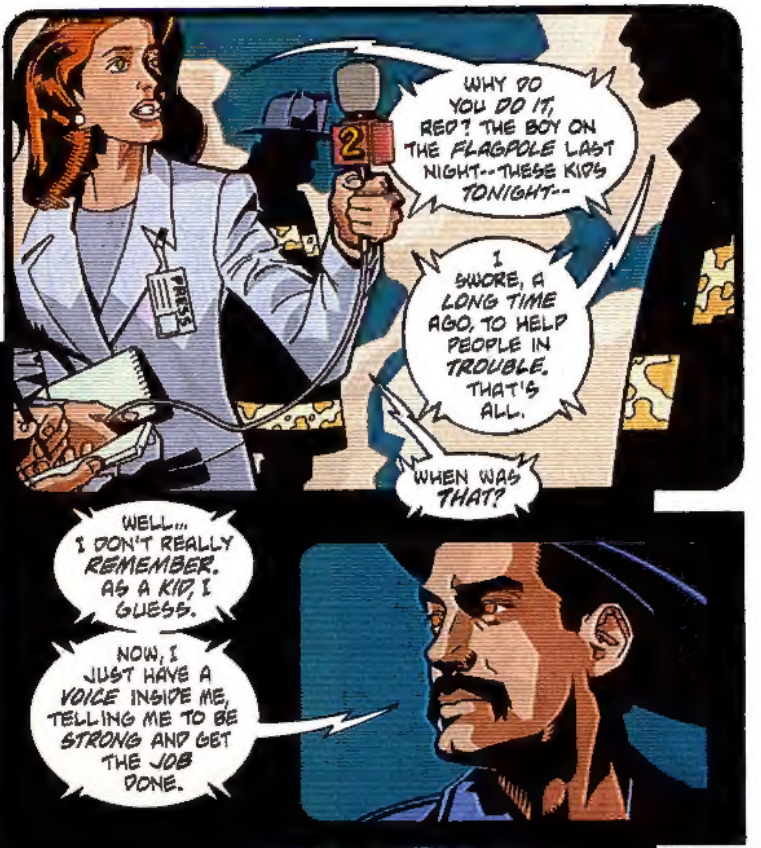
LISTEN, AMES, THIS WHOLE THING IS WHACKED. YOU GOT ANYTHING HINKY ON THIS BROAD?
NOT A THING, SARGE. MRS. Y HAS BEEN A FIXTURE HERE FOR YEARS. THERE'S NEVER BEEN ANY SUSPICION OF NUMBERS OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT.

AND YET THE RIDDLER SENT A RIDDLE, AND GOT US ALL HERE...
HOLY GOD! IT MUST BE A DECOY! SOMETHING ELSE IS GOING ON, SOMEWHERE ELSE!


BUT THE SUCCEEDING HOURS PROVE SERGEANT AMES WRONG. THE CITY IS UNUSUALLY QUIET TONIGHT...
MIGNOLA FLEET

IT'S JUST BUSINESS AS USUAL--

BOSS, WHATEVER YOU'RE TRYIN'A WORK OUT, LET IT GO. WE NEED YA TA STAY SHARP AS LONG AS WE'RE UP AGAINST THE BATMAN.
AH, BUT ARE WE? THE BAT OR NOT THE BAT-- THAT IS THE QUESTION.


WHY DO YOU DO IT, RED? THE BOY ON THE FLAGPOLE LAST NIGHT--THESE KIDS TONIGHT--
I SWORE, A LONG TIME AGO, TO HELP PEOPLE IN TROUBLE. THAT'S ALL.
WHEN WAS THAT?
WELL... I DON'T REALLY REMEMBER. AS A KID, I GUESS.
NOW, I JUST HAVE A VOICE INSIDE ME, TELLING ME TO BE STRONG AND GET THE JOB DONE.

THIS JUST IN TO ALL NIGHT NEWS. RED INFANTE, THE HEROIC FIREMAN WHO SAVED LITTLE TOMMY LAST NIGHT, SAVED TWO TEEN-AGERS TONIGHT. OUR ROGER MARSHALL ASKED HIM WHY.
WHAT WALKS LIKE A BAT, BUT DOESN'T TALK LIKE A BAT?
BOSS, GO TO BED.
I SWORE, A LONG TIME AGO, TO HELP PEOPLE IN TROUBLE. THAT'S ALL.
I JUST HAVE A VOICE INSIDE ME, TELLING ME TO BE STRONG AND GET THE JOB DONE.

KA-CHING!

SOON, THE NEXT DAY. THERE'S NEVER BEEN AN EARLIER START TO MEETINGS OF THE WAYNE FOUNDATION--

--AND SO, MISTER WAYNE, WE'RE OUT AHEAD OF OUR MOST OPTIMISTIC PROJECTIONS. THANKS TO YOUR CONTINUED DONATIONS, WE WERE ABLE TO CATCH THE RISING MARKET EARLIER THAN MOST.

Umm.

BRUCE SEEMS PARTICULARLY ALOOF TODAY.

YOU CAN TELL HE DOESN'T WANT TO BE HERE. BUT TRUTH TO TELL, NEITHER DO I.

HOW ARE YOU FEELING, BRENDA? KIDNAPPED BY THE RIDDLER, RESCUED BY THE BATMAN--!

IT WAS TREMENDOUSLY EXCITING, CAROL! A RESTAURANT PRIDES ITSELF ON AN UNRUFFLED ATMOSPHERE--YOU CAN GET INSULATED--

--BUT WHEN THE CITY BREAKS IN--!

SOON ENOUGH, THE MEETING OF THE "BORED" DIES THE DEATH.

THANK YOU, JOE. DO NOT CALL EXCEPT FOR EMERGENCIES.

BRUCE--A MOMENT OF YOUR TIME.

MUST GO, BRENDA. WORK.

OH, COME ON. HAVE A DRINK WITH ME. I'LL TELL YOU ABOUT THE KIDNAPPING!

NO.

YES! MY GOD, THE BATMAN RAN OFF ON ME, AND NOW YOU. I'M NOT THAT HARD TO LOOK AT, AM I?
SEEN HARDER.
THEN IT'S SETTLED--A DRINK, SOME TALK--COME ON.
FIREHOUSE NO. 34--
'BYE, RED. SEE YA NEXT SHIFT.
GIVE THE REST OF US A CHANCE TO GET ON TV THEN.
HAHA. SEE YA, BOB.
G.C.F.D.
PARDON ME, DO YOU HAVE ANY GRAY POOP ON--?
OR IS HE INSIDE YOU?
WHAT--? YOU'RE THE RIDDLER--!
AND YOU'RE RIDDLED WITH BAT!
I WANT WHAT YOU HAVE!
GIVE IT UP!
YES, YOU DON'T WANT SOME NAMELESS FIREMAN!
YES!!
YOU WANT SOMEONE YOU KNOW!

--I WAS *BOUND AND HELPLESS* IN THE RIDDLER'S HANDS--AND THEN, STRIDING OUT OF THE NIGHT, *HE* WAS THERE!

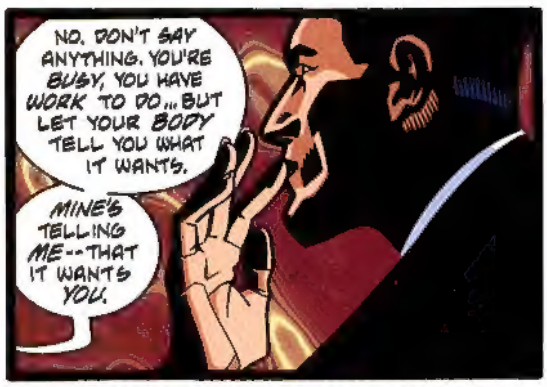
YOU *KNOW* THE BATMAN, DON'T YOU, BRUCE?

NO.

NEWSPAPER TALK.

YOU WERE ALWAYS *STRONG*, BRUCE--A GOOD, STRONG *MAN*--BUT I'VE NEVER KNOWN YOU TO BE THE *SILENT* TYPE, *TOO*.

Umm.



IT'S MINE! MINE! THE BATMAN'S SPIRIT IS MINE!

I SOLVED THE RIDDLE!

HIS SPIRIT-- HIS VERY LIFE FORCE--WAS BLASTED FREE WHEN HE DIED ON THE POWER GRID. AND SOMEHOW, IT DIDN'T GET BACK TO HIM WHEN THEY REVIVED HIM. IT HAD TO FIND A NEW HOME--OR A SERIES OF HOMES.

NOW IT'S IN ME!

I CONTROL THE ONE THING HE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT!

THE RIDDLER CONTROLS THE BAT--

urkh!

FUNNY. IT SEEMED TO RESIST WHEN I SAID THAT I CONTROL--

aggh!

Heh! IT'S HIS SPIRIT ALL RIGHT. IT DOESN'T LIKE BEING IN ME. BUT IT HAS TO BE IN SOMEONE OR IT'LL DIE, SO IT HAS NO CHOI--

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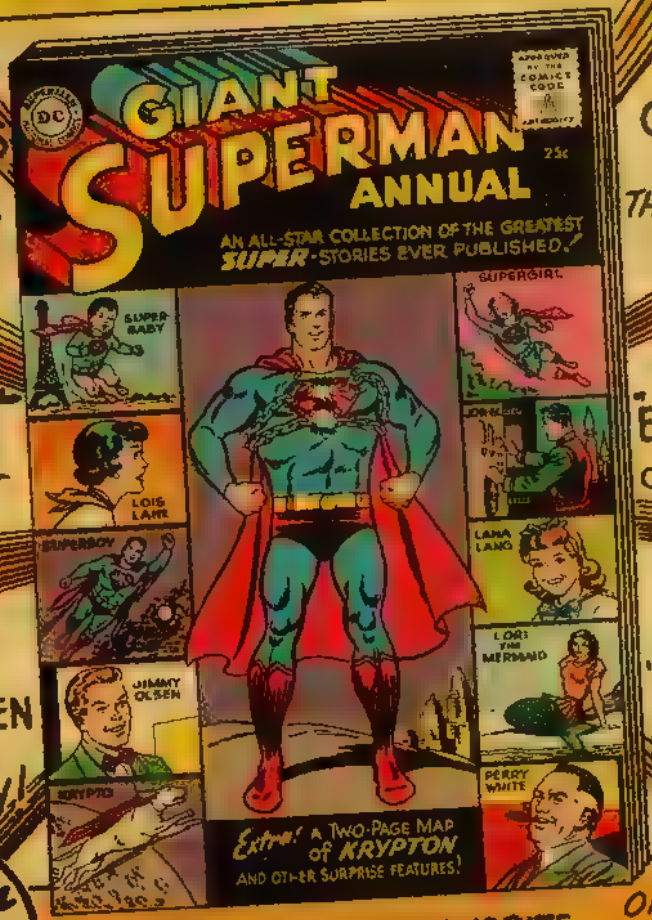

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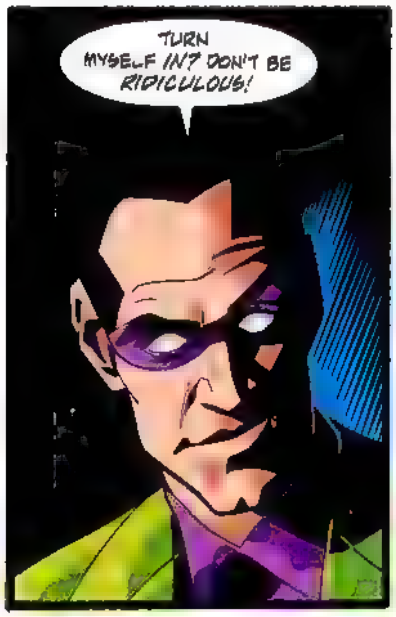
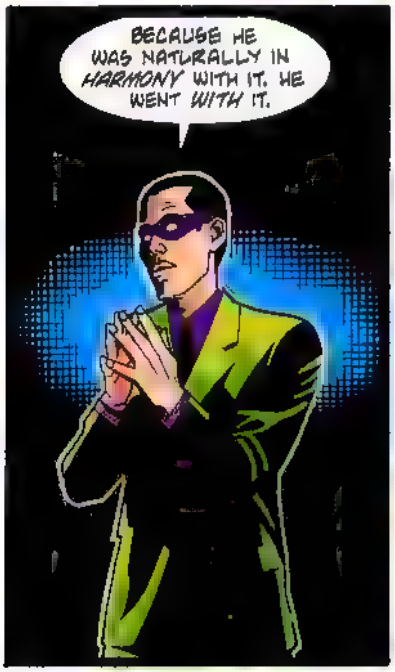

TURN MYSELF IN? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!

NOW YOU LISTEN TO ME--
YOU CAN'T DRIVE ME! I'M NOTHING LIKE YOU!!

IS THIS WHAT HAPPENED WITH LITTLE TOMMY? HE FOUGHT IT AND IT DROVE HIM OVER THE EDGE?
WHY DIDN'T THE FIREMAN --?


BECAUSE HE WAS NATURALLY IN HARMONY WITH IT. HE WENT WITH IT.

AND ME? A CROOK? A CHISELER, A NO-GOOD--

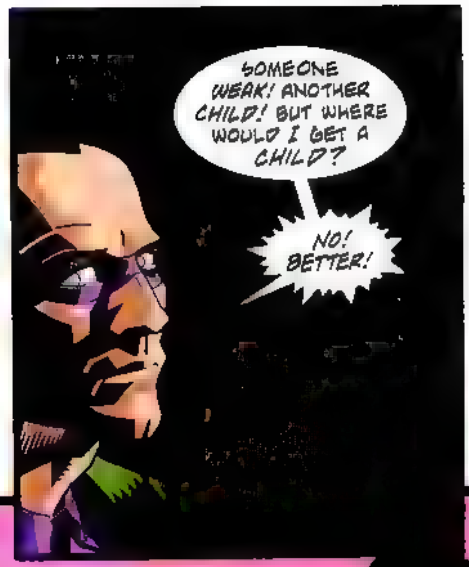
WAIT A MINUTE! THAT'S NOT ME TALKING!
MY GOD! IT'S TRYING TO CONTROL ME!

WHO'S CONTROLLING WHO? WHICH CAME FIRST, THE CHICKEN OR THE EGG?
SEE? THAT'S ME. HA HA HA! RIDDLES--

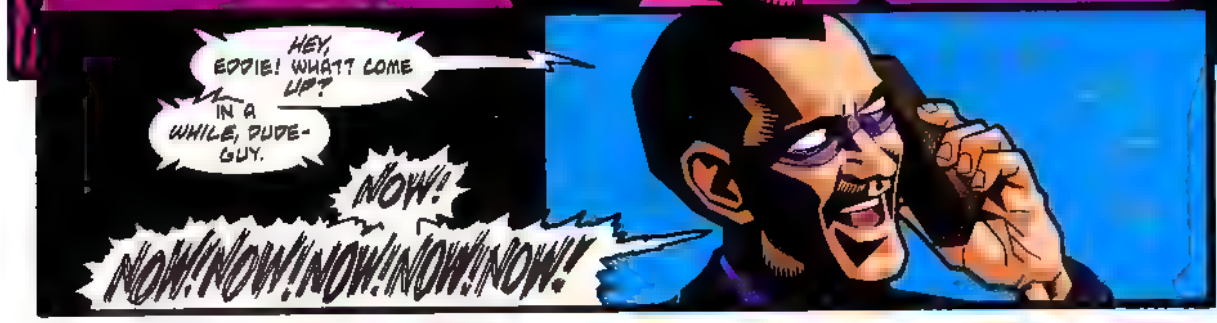
WHICH COMES NEXT, JAIL OR MADNESS?

NO! GET OUT! GET OUT OF MY HEAD!

THIS WAS A MISTAKE! A TERRIBLE MISTAKE! IT'LL DESTROY ME! I'VE GOT TO PASS IT ON!
ONE OF MY MEN!
NO! HAVING ONE OF MY MEN UNDER BATMAN'S SWAY WOULD BE SUICIDE!


SOMEONE WEAK! ANOTHER CHILD! BUT WHERE WOULD I GET A CHILD?
NO! BETTER!

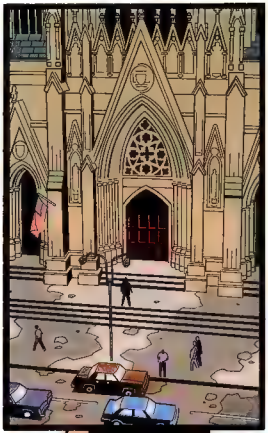
beep beep
'SCUSE ME. STAY RIGHT THERE, TALL-DARK-AND-DARK.
CEL PHONE.


HEY, EDDIE! WHAT'S COME UP?
IN A WHILE, DUDE-GUY.
NOW!
NOW!NOW!NOW!NOW!NOW!

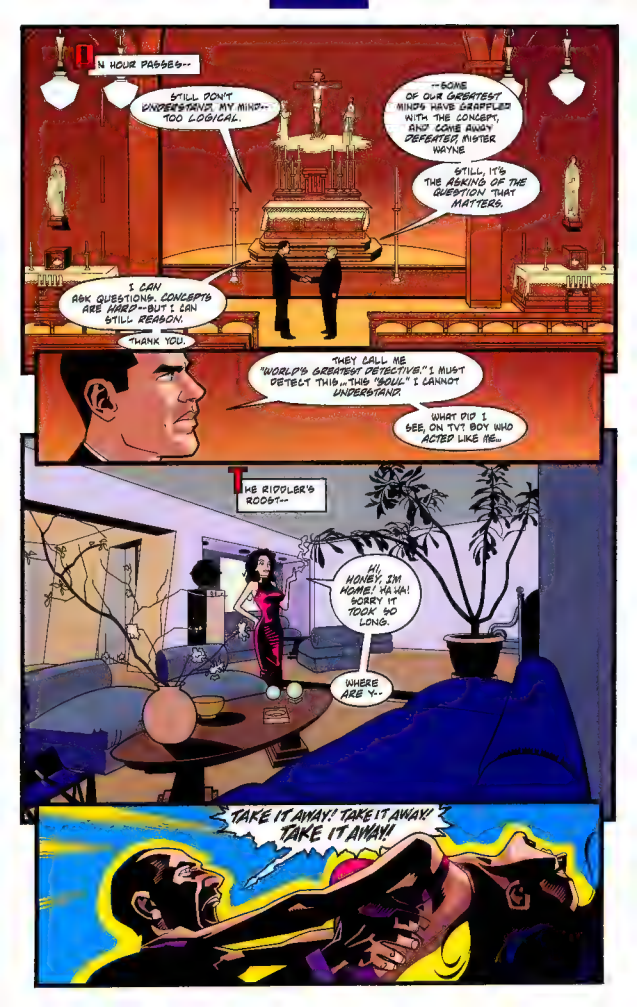
I'LL HOLD OUT--TILL YOU GET HERE!
AND NOT A MOMENT MORE!!!

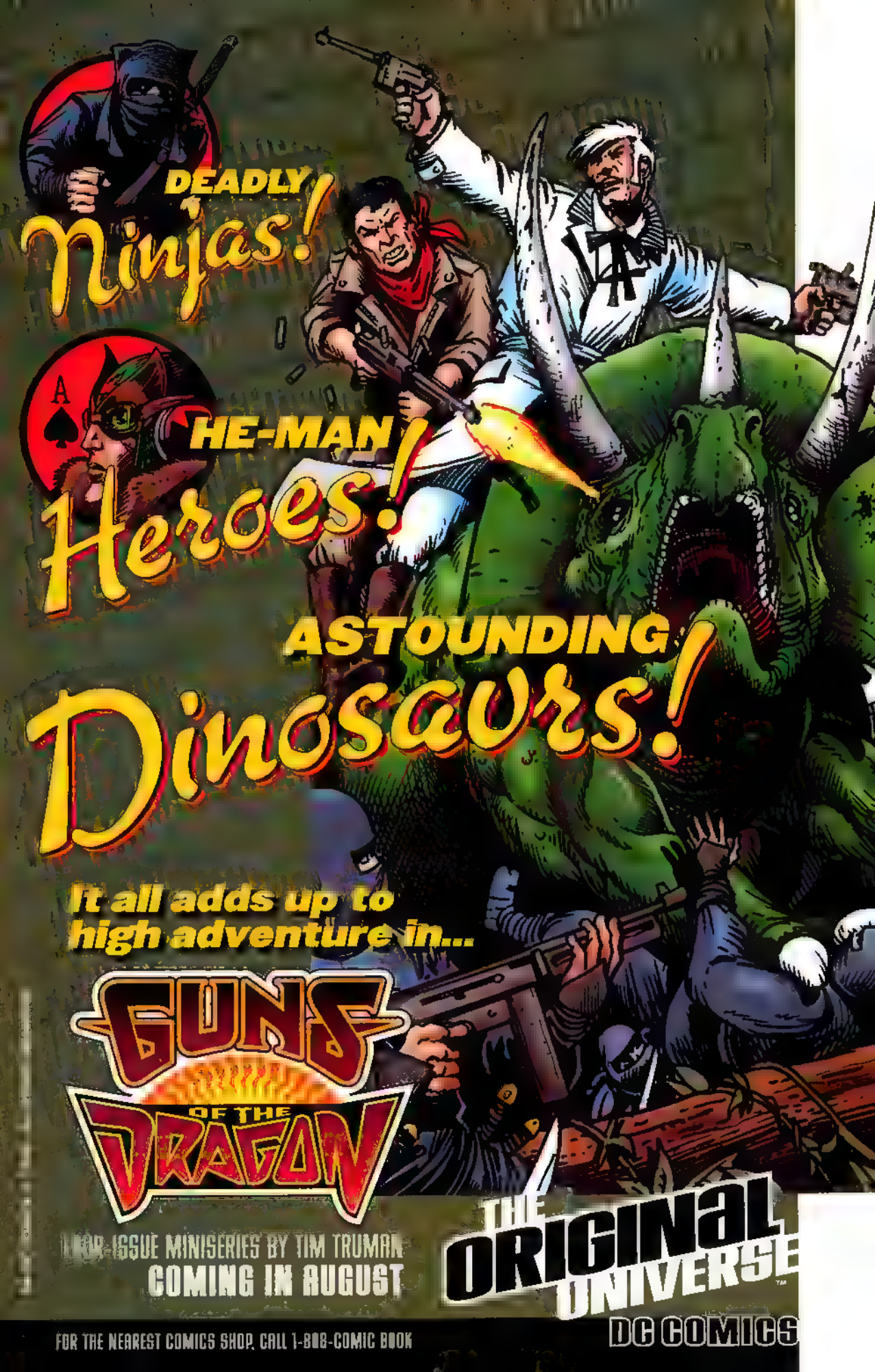
NOT LIKE ME. I WAS ONLY... A BODY...

THE GOTHAM-ASTORIA
I'M MORE THAN THAT, AT LEAST... I THINK I MUST BE...



FATHER, PLEASE TALK ABOUT--
--SOULS...


AN HOUR PASSES--
STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND, MY MIND--TOO LOGICAL.
--SOME OF OUR GREATEST MINDS HAVE GRAPPLED WITH THE CONCEPT, AND COME AWAY DEFEATED MISTER WAYNE
STILL, IT'S THE ASKING OF THE QUESTION THAT MATTERS.
I CAN ASK QUESTIONS. CONCEPTS ARE HARD--BUT I CAN STILL REASON.
"THANK YOU.
THEY CALL ME "WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE." I MUST DETECT THIS...THIS "SOUL." I CANNOT UNDERSTAND.
WHAT DID I SEE, ON TV? BOY WHO ACTED LIKE ME...
THE RIDDLER'S ROOST--
HI, HONEY, I'M HOME! HA HA! SORRY IT TOOK SO LONG.
WHERE ARE Y--
TAKE IT AWAY! TAKE IT AWAY! TAKE IT AWAY!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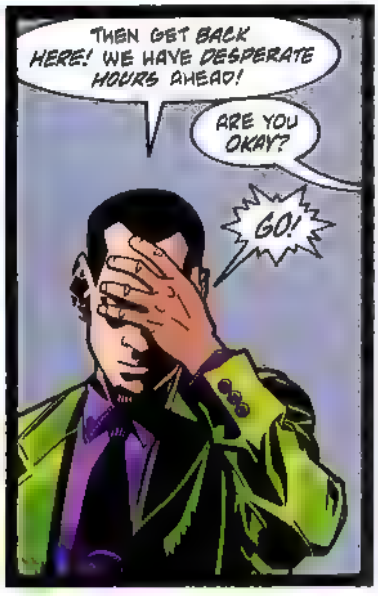
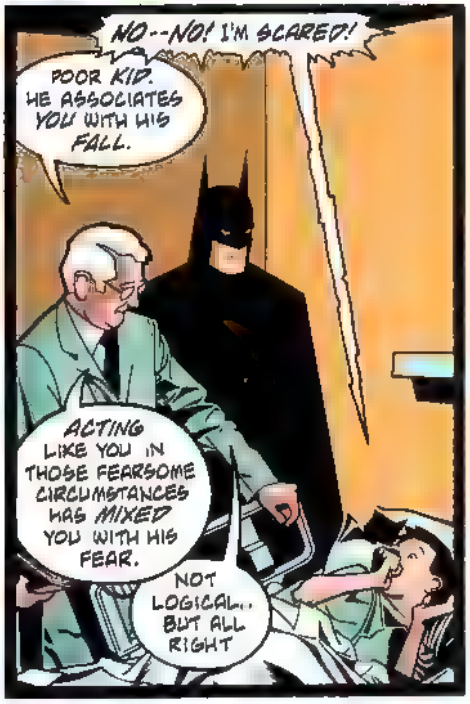
TAKE IT...
TAKE IT...

ADDISON--! HARPER--!

GET HER OUT OF HERE! DUMP HER SOMEWHERE!
WHERE, BOSS?
ANYWHERE! JUST GET IT--HER--FAR AWAY FROM ME!


THEN GET BACK HERE! WE HAVE DESPERATE HOURS AHEAD!
ARE YOU OKAY?
GO!

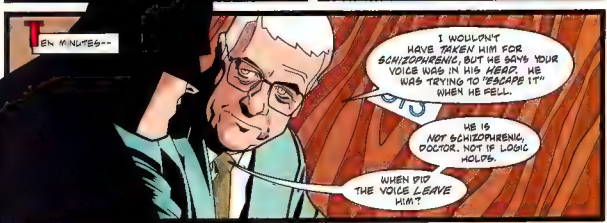
GOTHAM GENERAL--
YOU'RE LUCKY HE'S AWAKE. HE WAS UNCONSCIOUS FOR TWELVE HOURS AFTER WE GOT HIM.
TOMMY, THE BATMAN IS HERE TO SEE YOU.


NO--NO! I'M SCARED!
POOR KID. HE ASSOCIATES YOU WITH HIS FALL.
ACTING LIKE YOU IN THOSE FEARSOME CIRCUMSTANCES HAS MIXED YOU WITH HIS FEAR.
NOT LOGICAL.. BUT ALL RIGHT

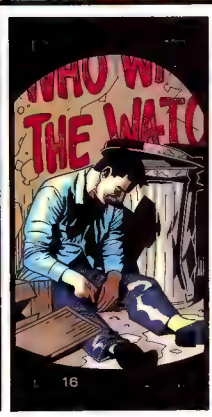
TOMMY, I WILL TALK, BUT YOU WON'T SEE ME.
AAAAAA!
JUST HEARING YOUR VOICE SEEMS TO MAKE IT WORSE...

THEN... YOU ASK.

ASK HIM IF A VOICE MADE HIM JUMP...


TEN MINUTES--
I WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN HIM FOR SCHIZOPHRENIC, BUT HE SAYS YOUR VOICE WAS IN HIS HEAD. HE WAS TRYING TO ESCAPE IT" WHEN HE FELL.
HE IS NOT SCHIZOPHRENIC, DOCTOR. NOT IF LOGIC HOLDS.
WHEN DID THE VOICE LEAVE HIM?

THIRTY MINUTES--


THE WATC

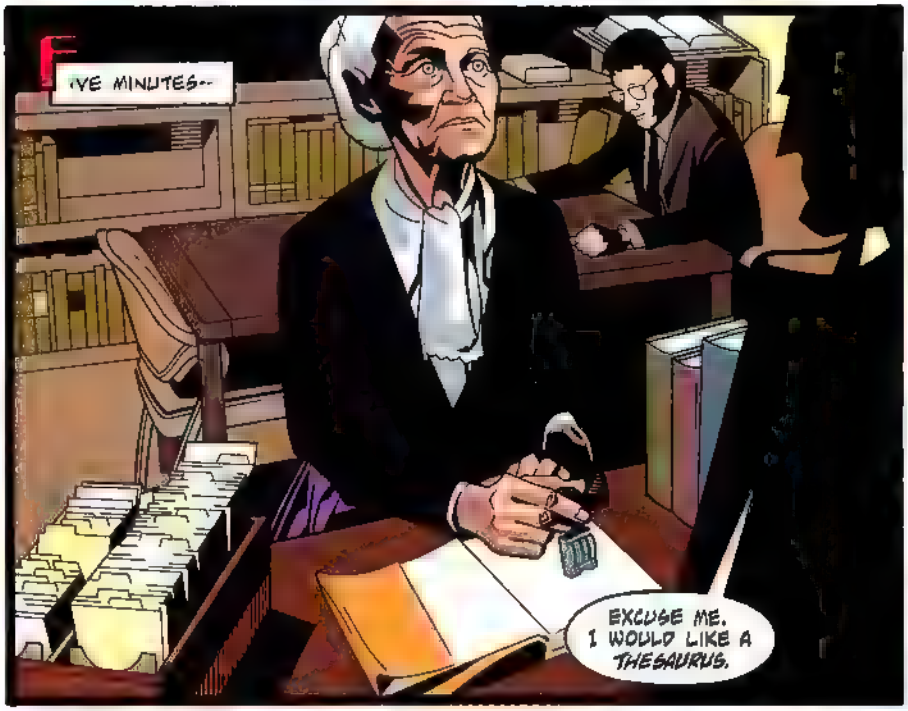
RIDDLER.
RIDDLER...

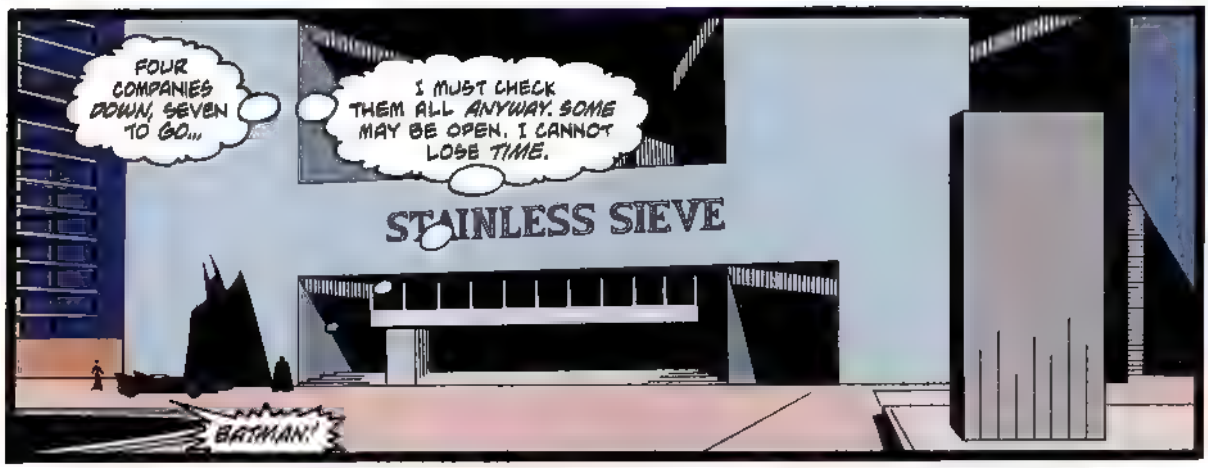
THE RIDDLER HAS MY "SOUL"--? HE FOLLOWED THE SAME TRAIL.

I SHOULD FEEL ANXIETY, I THINK--BUT I FEEL NOTHING.

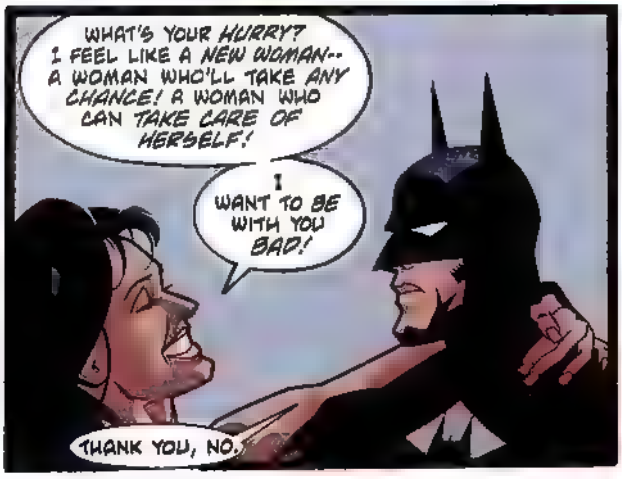
TOM WAS UNCONSCIOUS TWELVE HOURS. IT HAS BEEN LESS THAN FIVE SINCE THE FIREMAN'S NIGHT SHIFT ENDED.

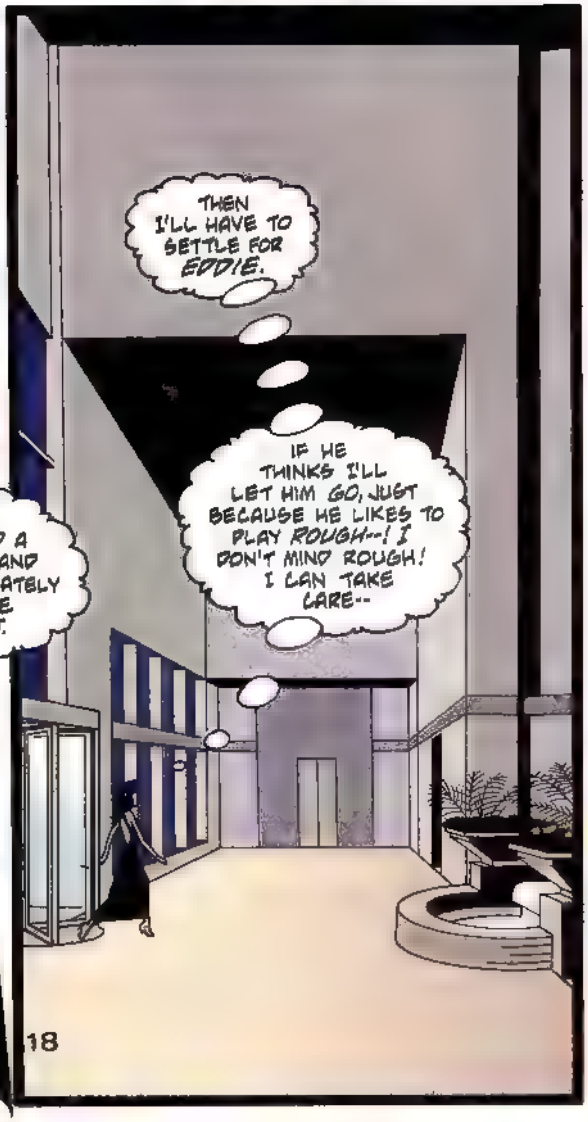
THE POWER OF MY "SOUL" IS WEAKENING WITHOUT ME. AND I'M... ADJUSTING TO THE LOSS.

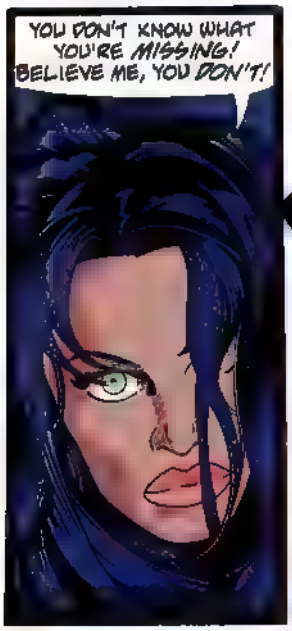



FOUR COMPANIES DOWN, SEVEN TO GO...
I MUST CHECK THEM ALL ANYWAY. SOME MAY BE OPEN. I CANNOT LOSE TIME.
STAINLESS SIEVE
BATMAN!

BATMAN! IF I WERE SOMEBODY ELSE I MIGHT HAVE A COMPLAINT TO LODGE--
--BUT LOOKING AT YOU, I'VE GOT A BETTER IDEA!
EXCUSE ME?


WHAT'S YOUR HURRY? I FEEL LIKE A NEW WOMAN-- A WOMAN WHO'LL TAKE ANY CHANCE! A WOMAN WHO CAN TAKE CARE OF HERSELF!
I WANT TO BE WITH YOU BAD!
THANK YOU, NO.


THEN I'LL HAVE TO SETTLE FOR EDDIE.
IF HE THINKS I'LL LET HIM GO, JUST BECAUSE HE LIKES TO PLAY ROUGH--! I DON'T MIND ROUGH! I CAN TAKE CARE--


YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE MISSING! BELIEVE ME, YOU DON'T!

IT'S CALLED A "SOUL"--AND UNFORTUNATELY YOU'RE RIGHT.

WHAT?!!
HI, CHERÉE! YOU WANT TO SEE THE BOSS?
HE DON' WANNA SEE YOU.

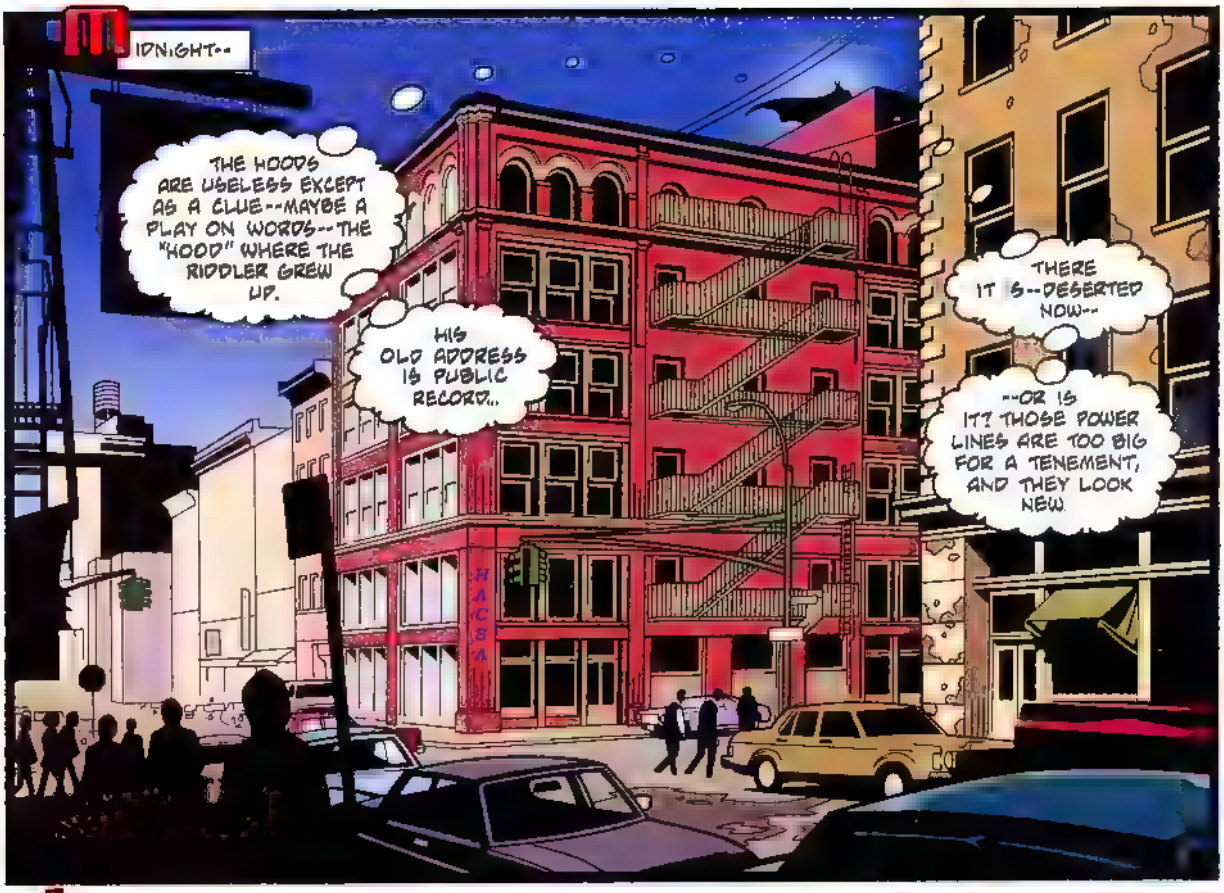
ONCE HE CALMED DOWN, HE REALIZED YOU CAN'T BE LEFT LOOSE WITH WHAT YOU GOT INSIDE YA.
BUT HE CAN'T KILL YOU, EITHER.
NO TELLING WHAT'D HAPPEN THEN!
SO YOU'RE OURS.

TEN O'CLOCK--
ALL COMPANIES CHECKED. NO LUCK TONIGHT.
THIS IS THE BATMAN. THE RIDDLER SENT A RIDDLE THE LAST THREE NIGHTS AT THIS TIME.
IT CAME? READ IT TO ME.

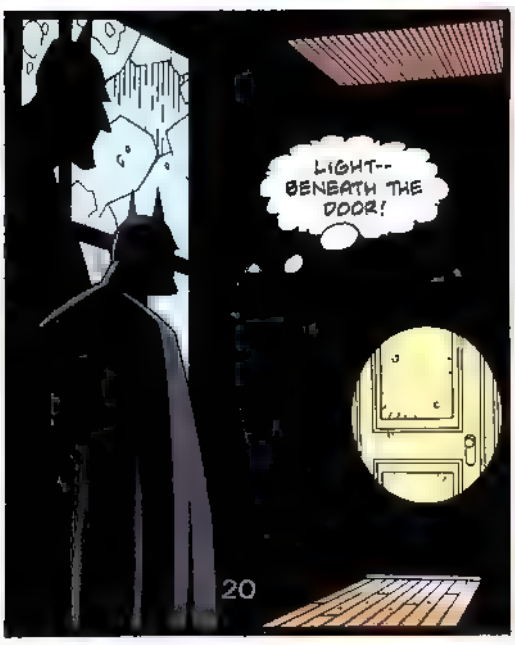
"BUY A GOTHAM GAZETTE FOR A BUCK."
THAT'S ALL?
NO I DON'T UNDERSTAND.
BUT I FEEL... I'M GETTING CLOSER..
CITY EDITION
THAM GAZETTE
75¢
RIDDLER ON A DELI ROLL
Porter-Dell Quest

EVEN FIFTEEN--
GLAD WE CAUGHT YOU AGAIN! IT WAS ANDRE WARE, THE GOTHAM GUARDIANS' QUARTERBACK! GET IT?
BUY A PAPER FOR SEVENTY-FIVE CENTS--GET A "QUARTERBACK!"
THE GUYS WHO KIDNAPPED HIM ALL WORE HOODS. AS IF WE DIDN'T KNOW WHO THEY ARE ALREADY
BARBERSHOP
jazz
OPEN FOR DINNER
AUSTIN
ECKANKA'S
JEWELRY

HOODS...!


IDNIGHT--
THE HOODS ARE USELESS EXCEPT AS A CLUE--MAYBE A PLAY ON WORDS--THE "HOOD" WHERE THE RIDDLER GREW UP.
HIS OLD ADDRESS IS PUBLIC RECORD...
THERE IT IS--DESERTED NOW--
--OR IS IT? THOSE POWER LINES ARE TOO BIG FOR A TENEMENT, AND THEY LOOK NEW.
HACSA

NSIDE WITHOUT A TRACE--
--DOWN TWO HUNDRED STAIRS WITHOUT A SOUND--


LIGHT--BENEATH THE DOOR!

SPLASH
IT'S JUST PLYWOOD, AND THE LOCK WON'T STOP ME

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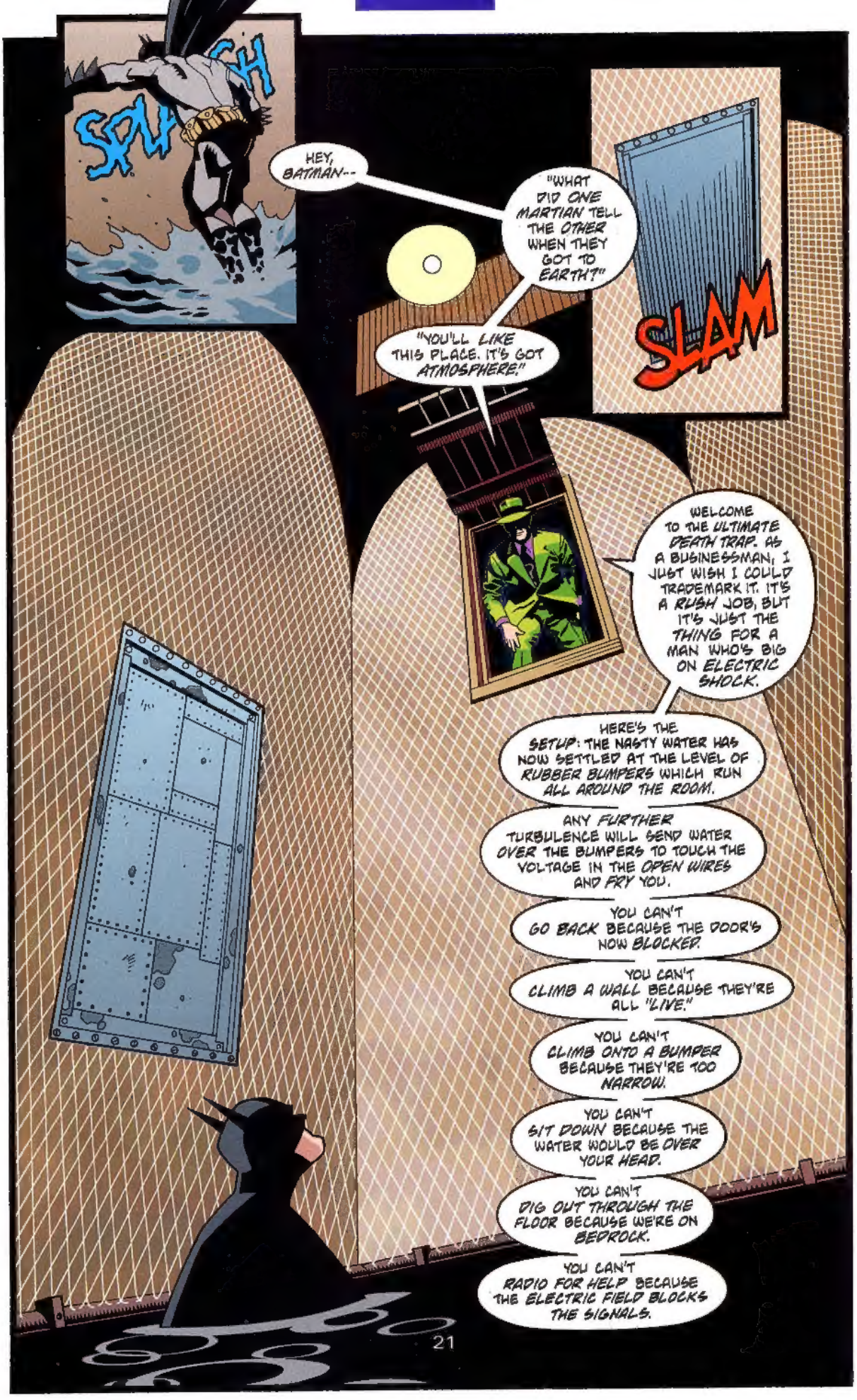
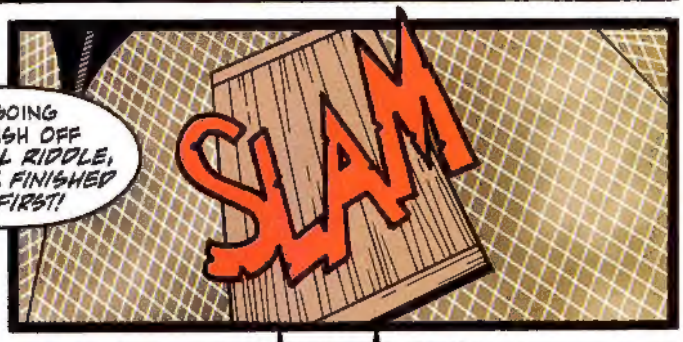

SPLASH
HEY, BATMAN--
"WHAT DID ONE MARTIAN TELL THE OTHER WHEN THEY GOT TO EARTH?"
SLAM
"YOU'LL LIKE THIS PLACE. IT'S GOT ATMOSPHERE."
WELCOME TO THE ULTIMATE DEATH TRAP. AS A BUSINESSMAN, I JUST WISH I COULD TRADEMARK IT. IT'S A RUSH JOB, BUT IT'S JUST THE THING FOR A MAN WHO'S BIG ON ELECTRIC SHOCK.
HERE'S THE SETUP: THE NASTY WATER HAS NOW SETTLED AT THE LEVEL OF RUBBER BUMPERS WHICH RUN ALL AROUND THE ROOM.
ANY FURTHER TURBULENCE WILL SEND WATER OVER THE BUMPERS TO TOUCH THE VOLTAGE IN THE OPEN WIRES AND FRY YOU.
YOU CAN'T GO BACK BECAUSE THE DOOR'S NOW BLOCKED.
YOU CAN'T CLIMB A WALL BECAUSE THEY'RE ALL "LIVE."
YOU CAN'T CLIMB ONTO A BUMPER BECAUSE THEY'RE TOO NARROW.
YOU CAN'T SIT DOWN BECAUSE THE WATER WOULD BE OVER YOUR HEAD.
YOU CAN'T DIG OUT THROUGH THE FLOOR BECAUSE WE'RE ON BEDROCK.
YOU CAN'T RADIO FOR HELP BECAUSE THE ELECTRIC FIELD BLOCKS THE SIGNALS.

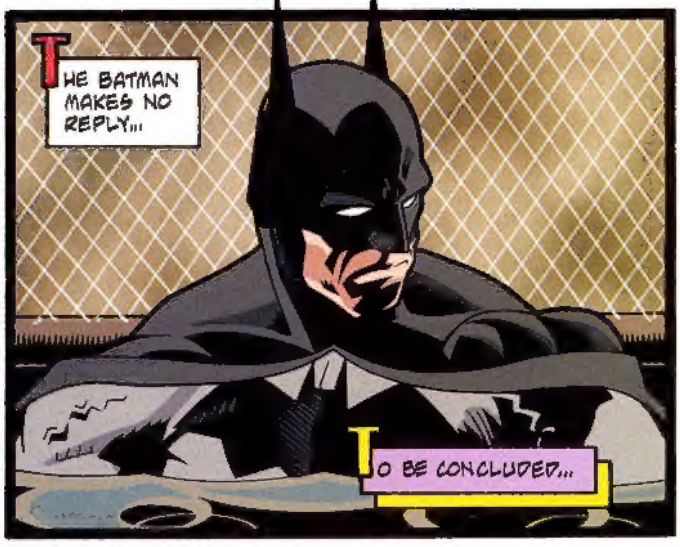
PRETTY DAMN GOOD, huh? NOW, I LIKE TO MAKE PEOPLE THINK, SO I'M NOT KILLING YOU OUTRIGHT, BUT I HONESTLY BELIEVE THERE'S NO WAY OUT FOR YOU--
--SO THINK ABOUT THAT!

I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU, RIDDLER.
I WANT WHAT BELONGS TO ME.

YOUR SPIRIT? TOO LATE-- I HANDED IT OFF LIKE A USED TISSUE.
AS IT TURNED OUT, I HATED HAVING IT AND I HATE YOU MORE THAN I EVER DID!
PRESS
SO NOW FRY, STARVE, OR DROWN! ANY WAY YOU WANT IT, YOU'RE GOING TO DIE IN THIS SLEAZY UNKNOWN CHAMBER!

I'M GOING TO FINISH OFF MY PRIMAL RIDDLE, KNOWING I FINISHED YOU FIRST!


SLAM


THE BATMAN MAKES NO REPLY...
TO BE CONCLUDED...

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT

Dear LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT,

It's been a while since we've had a "fantasy" issue about the Dark Knight. Alan Grant and Carlos Ezquerra, that incredible team that brought us many a tale of Judge Dredd, did a masterful job of telling a tale of Batman. Well, a Batman.

I suppose the story couldn't really be classified as an "Elseworlds," as nothing really prevents it from being a story in the DCU. The story takes place far enough into the future that Bruce Wayne will definitely be dead, and it doesn't really interfere with the history of the Batman. I'm curious, however, if Robin is jealous, as he is never mentioned in the ancient lore of Gotham's greatest detective.

As is always the case, this Gotham, like that of the present day, is a corrupt one. A handful of ill-supported police are all that stand between the city and chaos, and with political threats, those in power do nothing to interfere. The sinister mutant telepath/pyrokinetic is so far above the law that no one dares to cross him. Well, no one human, anyway.

Making Batman a robot was a stroke of sheer genius. I can honestly say I just didn't see it coming. Also, the fact that this robot is so human made me feel a little less dumb, as they were fooled by him as well. What a marvelous tale! Bravo! I can only hope the following 99 stories can make LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #200 as good as LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #100.

TOMMY FRANDERS
BROOKLYN, NY

Yeah, the more things change, the more they remain the same, right, Tommy? Gotham had hovering estates, flame-spewing mutants, and still, crime controls the city. But like the previous Gotham, Batman still protects the streets. Er...well, he did, anyway.

Dear LOTDK,

Cover to end, LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT #101 was an impressive read. You must be fostering a great deal of competition among your stable of artists! In issue #100, you grace the cover with an incredible "Robin" montage done by Alex Ross. I honestly thought you couldn't top it. I was wrong.

Kevin Nowlan's cover for issue #101 made it a definite keeper. The metal tone looming over the Batman's face made it a great metaphor for his hard-edged tactics against crime. Although the robotic Batman in the story did not appear as metallic (on the outside) as the cover Batman, even "Mack" is not as unbending and cold as the Dark Knight is on crime.

Jax made for an interesting villain. He's a bit more cyberpunkish than your typical Batman foe, but different times mean different villains. Although I think that the Bruce Wayne Batman would also have been able to take out Jax, it's interesting to see how differently the two Batmen operate. Also, the motivations of the two heroes differ greatly. One is still innocent and pure, and in some ways, more human. Oddly enough, it's the robot.

Thanks for a great story. I'd love to see Mack rescued from the junkheap. His further adventures would make for a great annual event in the pages of LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT. Or, perhaps you could have a series with other glimpses into the dark future of the DC Universe. What is the Superman of this era like? Is there a Wonder Woman? Who survived and who died?

MIKE KRUELLER
LAS VEGAS, NV

If it's a glimpse into the future you want, DC is going to make you very happy in just two months. We've got some major plans a-brewin', and we think you're going to be quite pleased.

Dear LOTDK,

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT is a confusing book to follow. Some stories feature Robin, others don't. There doesn't seem to be a straight time line to follow. The two-part Clayface story was terrific, but it also seemed to have taken place earlier than, say, the "Heat" 3-parter, featuring Catwoman and Catman, which came out years earlier. So, how exactly does this work?

BRYAN WILKS
SEATTLE, WA

Bryan, LEGENDS is one of the few DC Universe titles that tells mostly non-continuity stories. The deal is, these stories aren't supposed to be time specific. However, the majority of the stories do take place before Dick Grayson, Robin, entered Batman's life. Some stories do take place in the future, some in the past, and some may be events that took place in the Batman's head, like the extra-dimensional 3-parter "The Sleeping"...or did it?

Dear LOTDK:
Re: LOTDK #101

Wow! This BATMAN tale is probably the closest to being fantasy-based without being an "Elseworlds" or "Legends of the Dead Earth." I like Mack a lot. There's a sense of nobility and dedication in him, but

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there's also a great deal of innocence and naiveté which the true Batman never had.

I like the fact that this Batman is so different from the original. Although he is physically more powerful and tougher than "our" Batman, I gotta say I'd still rather have Bruce Wayne on my side than Mack. Don't get me wrong, I like the robot Batman, but you really can't replace the intelligence, savvy, and depth that the true Dark Knight possesses.

For future LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT stories, how about a Ra's al Ghul tale? Or how about a tale of Bruce after the events of KINGDOM COME? There are still a lot of Dark Knight stories that could be told that could really use LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT's unusual format. While we've seen plenty of stories featuring the friction-filled relationship between Batman and Superman, how about Batman and Wonder Woman? There was a glimpse of that in KINGDOM COME; let's explore it here, too.

ANITA DEPEW
BOSTON, MA

Dear LOTDK,

Although Batman has always been a favorite of comics readers for the fact that he's one of the few human super-heroes in the DC Universe, it's amazing how many different spins you could put on one character. A fascinating character, the Batman has inspired everyone from Robin to Batgirl to Azrael. And let's not forget, a lot of villains wouldn't be around if there were no Batman. But a robot? Now, that's inspiration!

Mack is a great new character to enter the Bat mythos. I think Bruce Wayne would be proud to see that his example allowed another to follow his lead in the pursuit of justice. Even though he's oil, gears, and springs, Mack was just as human as you or me. I enjoyed his journey of self-discovery, finding that he too, was a hero. It's only too bad that he would end up in a junk pile. But, I suppose, to a true hero, that wouldn't really matter, would it?

One of the few problems I had with the story, however, was the villain. Argo Jax was a tough customer, true, but his rather impressive powers seemed to be useless against Mack. If Mack were so effective against Jax, how come the police didn't just send a fleet of robots to attack the crime lord? It seemed to me that he was just suddenly powered down for the final conflict. I mean, he was able to generate mental illusions, set objects on fire. But, I guess the Batman was simply better.

Anyway, Jax aside, the real shining moment in the story was the genuine human nature that shone through from Mack. Also, the two children and their admiration for the Batman were fun to watch. It's nice to see that even in the future, Bruce Wayne's Batman wasn't forgotten. Hhhmmm...no sign of Wayne Technologies in the future. Is this telling us something? Funny, I thought in one form or another, that would still be around.

I'm definitely looking forward to the James Robinson tale set for next issue. If his Batman stories are anywhere near as good as his STARMAN has proven to be, we're in for a real treat.

MIGUEL PEREZ
BRONX, NY

NEXT ISSUE:

The conclusion of "The Primal Riddle" by Steve Englehart, Dusty Abell, and Drew Geraci, with a cover by Jason Pearson.

—Chuck Kim

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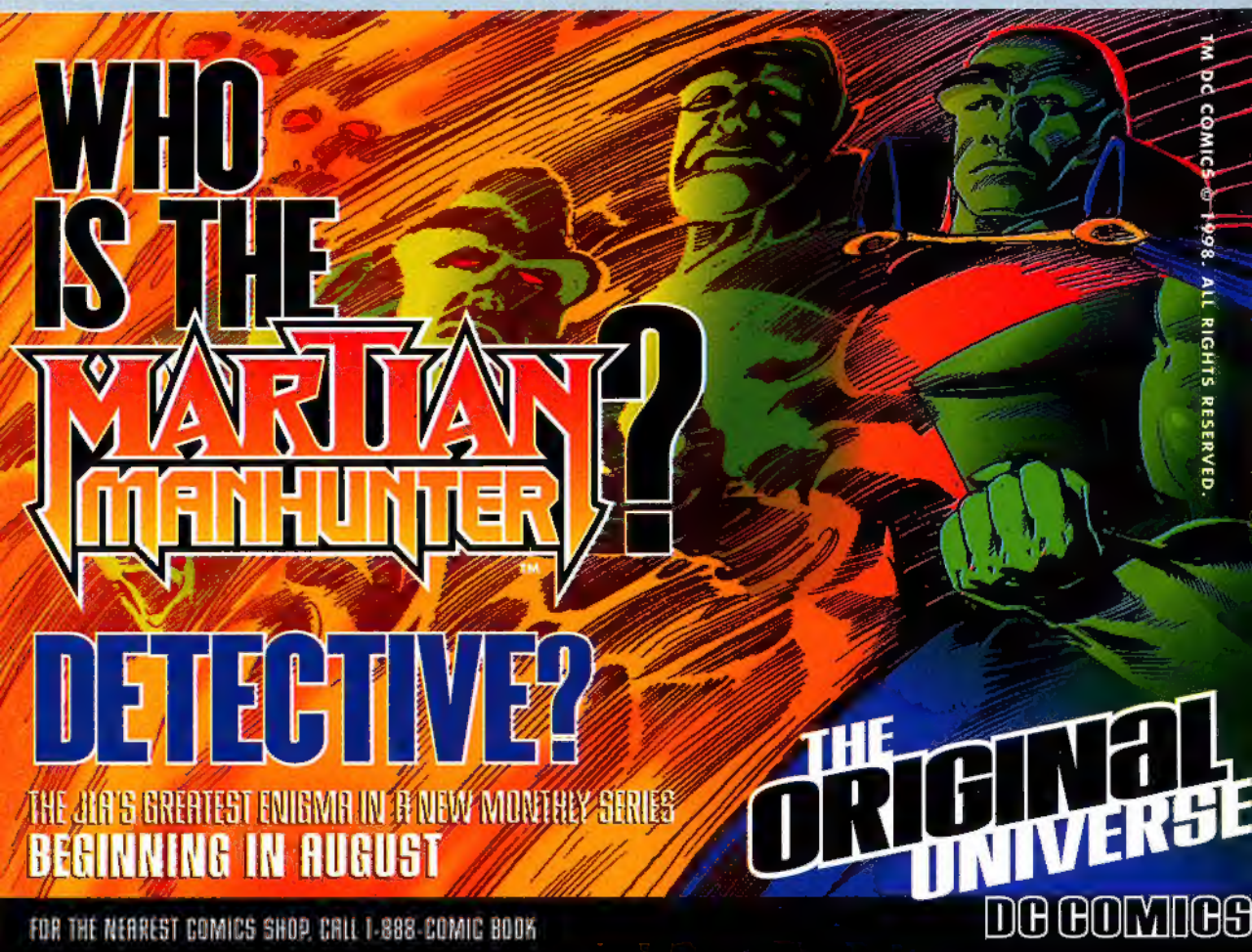
Cover by Jason Pearson